

# National Park Authority

20 March 2024

## **Present (In Person)**

Councillor D Clements (Chair)

Councillor S Alderman, Dr M Havard, Mrs J James, Councillor R Jordan, Councillor M Wiggins and Councillor C Williams BEM.

## **Present (Remotely)**

Councillor SL Hancock MBE, Dr R Heath-Davies, Mrs S Hoss, Councillor M James, Mr GA Jones, Councillor P Morgan, Councillor B Price, Councillor S Skyrme-Blackhall, Councillor V Thomas and Councillor A Wilcox.

## **Also in attendance:**

Arfon Fry (Health & Safety Project Manager), Tegryn Jones (Chief Executive), Michael Kent (Monitoring Officer), Caroline Llewellyn (Democratic Services Manager), Sara Morris (Director of Placemaking, Decarbonisation and Engagement), Gary Meopham (Estates Officer), Chloe Price (Llanion Services Manager) and Andrew Muskett (Building Projects Manager).

[Llanion Park, Pembroke Dock and Remotely 10.00am – 12.00; 12.10pm - 1:30pm]

[Councillor M James joined the meeting during consideration of report 04/24, the Health & Safety Policy]

### **1. Personal Matters**

The Chair recalled the recent passing of Councillor R Owens and acknowledged his great service to the Authority. A minute's silence was observed.

The Chair welcomed Councillor V Thomas to the Authority.

### **2. Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Dr R Plummer.

### **3. Disclosures of Interest**

Councillor B Price declared a personal interest in report 09/24, Visit Pembrokeshire funding.

### **4. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 07 February 2024 were presented for confirmation and signature.



Mrs J James highlighted that her presence at the previous meeting had not been recorded in the minutes and this was noted by Officers.

On the proposal of Mrs J James, it was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 07 February 2024 be confirmed and signed subject to the above amendment.

## 5. Action Log and Matters Arising

The action log was noted by Members.

**Noted.**

## 6. Chair's Announcements

The Chair reported that she had attended the following events:

- The Tackling Poverty Summit at Pembrokeshire College
- The St Davids Day Dinner hosted by St Davids City Council where the Coxswain of St Davids Lifeboat Station delivered an inspiring talk. The Chair expressed her gratitude to those who risk their lives in protecting others.
- The 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Welsh Designated Landscapes at the Senedd.

The Chair reported that following the closure of the Sustainable Farming Scheme, the Welsh National Parks submitted a collaborative consultation response which was impactful, and the Chair congratulated all involved.

It was also reported for the benefit of the public, that Authority Members were in the process of completing Carbon Literacy Training.

**Noted.**

## 7. Reports of meetings of various Authority Committees

The following reports of meetings of several of the Authority's Committees were presented to Members for consideration/information:

- (i) Development Management Committees held on 31/01/2024 and 19/02/2024;
- (ii) Human Resources Committee held on 17/01/2024;
- (iii) Youth Committees held on 23/01/2024 and 06/02/2024;
- (iv) Sustainable Development Fund Committee held on 24/01/2024;

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the above-mentioned Committees be adopted/received.

## 8. Membership of Committees and External Organisations



The Democratic Services Manager reported that it was necessary to appoint a Member(s) to fill the vacancies on the Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee, Employee Forum, Port of Milford Haven Advisory Committee and the Income Generation Group.

Following a discussion among Members, it was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The vacancies on the Audit & Corporate Services Review Committee and Employee Forum be filled by Councillor V Thomas
- b) The vacancy on the Port of Milford Haven Advisory Committee be filled by Councillor S Alderman
- c) Expressions of interest for the vacancy on the Income Generation Group be sent to the Democratic Services Manager.

## 9. **Health & Safety Policy**

The Chair welcomed the Health & Safety Project Manager who presented a report that sought the formal approval from Members in relation to the Authority's Health & Safety Policy. The Officer explained that the policy had been reviewed last year and although the format had significantly changed as a result, the contents largely remained the same.

A discussion ensued regarding the potential benefits of a Health & Safety Champion however it was agreed that having a Champion could result in a single Member bearing the responsibility, rather than all Members. On the topic of Member responsibility, it was requested that further details of this be featured in the policy, and this was noted by the Officer.

A Member questioned whether volunteers should be referenced more in the policy and the Officer clarified that under the Health & Safety at Work Act, Volunteers were classed as 'unpaid staff'. Based on this, the term 'Staff' in the policy also referred to Volunteers however the Officer agreed to feature a definition at the beginning of the document for clarity.

In response to a Members' query, it was confirmed that a review of the policy by the Health & Safety Group would take place annually, before being presented to the National Park Authority. It was added that Officers had the intention of also providing an annual Health & Safety report in addition to the existing quarterly updates presented to the Audit Committee.

A Member noted that the role of the Health & Safety Project Officer was not referenced in the policy, and they queried whether a statement explaining this role would add value. In response, the Chief Executive confirmed that the policy discussed responsibilities, rather than the roles of individual Officers.



A Member commented that the procedure for reporting serious incidents should be featured in the policy, and this was noted by the Officer.

In response to a Members' query, the Chief Executive confirmed that the Performance and Compliance Officer was in the process of auditing all Authority policies to identify whether any other policies were in need of a review. It was added that due to resource constraints, the review of policies would need to be prioritised.

The report discussed the Authority's need to secure effective leadership on Health & Safety and that as part of this, an individual advocate and lead for Health & Safety would be identified for all aspects of Visitor Safety as part of the Health & Safety Group. A Member suggested that the title of the Officer responsible for this be noted in the policy to ensure that staff were aware of who to approach if necessary.

On the proposal of Mrs J James, seconded by Dr M Havard, it was **RESOLVED** that, subject to the comments made in the meeting, the final wording and approval of the Health and Safety Policy be delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chair.

## 10. Risk Management Policy

The Chair welcomed the Chief Executive who presented a new Risk Management Policy for approval. It was reported that over recent years, the Authority's Internal Auditors had undertaken reviews of the Authority's risks and following recommendations from the auditors, a new policy had been developed. It was added that Auditors had also recommended that the Authority identify objectives and that all risks be linked to these.

A Member queried the process by which the proposed risk appetite would be established. In response, the Chief Executive explained that the appetite would be agreed through collaborative work with Officers and Members and with the use of a mutually agreed risk appetite statement. It was added that all Members would be included in this process.

On a final note, a Member highlighted that to reflect the recommendations of the Auditors, the word 'Objectives' should be changed to 'Outcomes' in the policy. Additionally, it was suggested that the word 'secure' be used when referring to the Authority's IT systems in the policy and consideration should be given to including additional definitions in Section 4 of the Policy.

On the proposal of Councillor S Hancock, seconded by Dr R Heath-Davies, it was **RESOLVED** that the Risk Management Policy and Outcomes for Risk Management be agreed with the above amendments.



## **11. Annual Governance Statement (AGS) 2023/24**

The Chief Executive then presented a report that provided Members with the opportunity to guide the preparation of the AGS for 2023/34. Members were informed that the AGS had been scrutinised at the latest Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee with a range of suggestions related to the document's formatting provided by Members. The suggestions had included condensing the document by hyperlinking/annexing the Terms of Reference, the use of more diagrams to convey information and the use of cross-referencing to avoid repetition.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the final draft of the AGS would be presented to a future National Park Authority meeting for final approval.

**Noted.**

## **12. Traeth Mawr / Newport Sands Update**

The Chair welcomed the Director of Placemaking, Decarbonisation and Engagement who presented an update on the outcome of changes to beach access by vehicles to Traeth Mawr along with results of a public engagement exercise undertaken. The report also featured a project proposal that would deliver enhancements to Traeth Mawr facilities and Members support was sought for the proposal.

It was agreed that the feedback received from members of the public, both positive and negative, had been invaluable and that ongoing communication with relevant stakeholders was imperative.

A discussion ensued regarding the accessibility at Traeth Mawr and Officers confirmed that the Authority had liaised with the Access Officer at Pembrokeshire County Council (PCC) before implementing changes at the site. It was acknowledged that although work had been carried out to improve accessibility to the site, further improvements were required, and Officers were actively seeking further solutions.

A discussion took place regarding the costs associated with the proposed project and the long-term sustainability of the development. The Officer confirmed that the Authority had already committed to contributing £14.6k per year for public toilets at Traeth Mawr to PCC, for two years. It was believed that through this capital investment, there would be a reduction in the overall running cost of the facility due to the reduced need for ad-hoc maintenance works and the installation of sustainable drainage.

A Member voiced concern regarding the potential over-development of an area that the Authority had worked to conserve. The Officer provided reassurances that Traeth Mawr had been identified as a location where a



development of this nature could go ahead without having an adverse impact on the special qualities of the area. It was added that Officers had liaised with the local Nature Partnership regarding landscaping to ensure the development delivered a positive environmental impact.

Members discussed the long-term prospects of the proposed development and the uncertainty that would follow the current 2-year financial commitment of the Authority to PCC in relation to public toilets. It was agreed that despite the uncertainty, the Authority would use the 2-year period to work collaboratively with PCC to reduce overall running costs of the site to increase its sustainability and improve the viability of the facilities in the long-term.

On the proposal of Councillor R Jordan, seconded by Councillor P Morgan, it was **RESOLVED** that:

- i) the feedback from the public engagement be noted
- ii) the project identified to improve facilities at Traeth Mawr be supported in its progression to planning and delivery stage.

### **13. St Davids Toilet Lease**

A report was presented that outlined a formal request received from Pembrokeshire County Council (PCC) regarding the early surrender of the lease at The Grove Public Convenience, St Davids.

Members were reminded that wider discussions regarding the provision of public toilets had been taking place between Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (PCNPA) and PCC since 2022. The report explained that the potential closure of the facility related to wider cost-saving measures being sought by PCC due to its budgetary pressures. It was added that due to the budgetary pressures also faced by the Authority, a maximum contribution of £110,00 per year for two years had been agreed. As part of the commitment, the public convenience at The Grove, St Davids, was not identified as a prioritised site and subsequently, would be marked for closure by PCC.

A Member highlighted a list of other public conveniences available in St Davids that were open throughout the year.

Initially option 4 - Accept the request but do not seek to negotiate a compensation payment was proposed by Dr Havard, but this was not seconded and was withdrawn. Members also discussed a variation on option 3, to accept the request but to ask PCC to decommission the building and return it as a shell, ie payment in kind. However, it was agreed that a cash payment would offer more flexibility depending on the final use that the building would be put to.



On the proposal of Councillor R Jordan, seconded by Mr G A Jones, it was **RESOLVED** that Pembrokeshire County Council's request for early surrender of the lease be accepted and the negotiation of compensation in payment or in kind be delegated to the Chief Executive, in conjunction with the Chair.

*[The meeting was adjourned from 12:00pm to 12:10pm]*

#### **14. Visit Pembrokeshire Funding**

The Chief Executive presented an update on the support provided by the Authority to the work of Visit Pembrokeshire (VP). It was reported that in 2020, the Authority had supported the establishment of VP and agreed financial support over the next 5-year period. The Chief Executive explained that in 2023, Members had agreed to change the support provided to VP for 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25 from an in-kind contribution of £34,900 to a cash contribution of £25,000 per year – to be reviewed on an annual basis.

The report detailed the performance of VP and based on their success, sought Members agreement to continue with the above arrangement.

A Member expressed concerns regarding the organisation's complex membership offering and the longer-term retention rates of members. With regards to the membership growth figures featured in the report, a Member queried whether benchmarking data was available. In response, the Chief Executive confirmed that benchmarking data was not available however 12-month comparisons of membership growth had been carried out and the trend was seen to be positive. The Chair, who represented the Authority on Visit Pembrokeshire, noted that while the information in report, which had been prepared by Visit Pembrokeshire, focussed on Membership, much other work was taking place, and she agreed to make this available to any Member who was interested. The Chief Executive also made an annual presentation to the Authority on the work of the organisation.

On the proposal of Councillor M Wiggins, seconded by Dr M Havard, it was **RESOLVED** that Members agree to continue with the decision taken in January 2023 and provide a cash contribution of £25k to Visit Pembrokeshire for the financial year 2024-25, instead of an in-kind contribution.

#### **15. Calendar of Meetings 2024/25**

The Chair welcomed the Democratic Services Manager who presented a calendar of meetings for the forthcoming year.



On the proposal of Mrs J James, seconded by Councillor C Williams, it was **RESOLVED** that the calendar of meetings for 2024/25 be approved.

## 16. Corporate Events

The Democratic Services Manager then presented a list of external corporate events which Members had been invited to attend. The Officer highlighted that since writing the report, details of the Wales Planning Conference had been made available and this was set to take place in Cardiff on the 20 June 2024.

On the proposal of Councillor M James, seconded by Mrs S Hoss, it was **RESOLVED** that the level of representation at the events listed in the report be authorised.

## 17. Member Remuneration

The report presented by the Democratic Services Manager outlined details of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales' decisions in relation to the Basic and Senior salaries payable to National Park Authority Members for the financial year of 2024/25. The Chair clarified that the level of Members' Salaries was set by the Panel and Members did not have a role in their determination. However, they were asked to determine which post(s) should be remunerated with a Senior Salary.

On the proposal of Mrs J James, seconded by Councillor R Jordan, it was **RESOLVED** that:

- i) the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales' Annual Report for 2024/25 be noted
- ii) The posts to be remunerated with a Senior Salary remain as the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Authority, together with the Chair of the Development Management Committee.

## 18. Exclusion of the public

It was noted that in discussing the following report, information might be shared which was commercially sensitive, and it was therefore requested that the public be excluded from the meeting.

On the proposal of Mrs J James, seconded by Councillor S Alderman, it was **RESOLVED** that the public be excluded from the meeting as exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, would be disclosed.

## 19. The Green Room Redevelopment Update

The Chair welcomed the Building Projects Manager who presented an update following the procurement process and provided a list of options for





consideration so that a decision could be made, and a preferred option progressed.

A discussion ensued regarding the various options on how to proceed, the advantages and disadvantages of each option being considered.

On the proposal of Councillor R Jordan, seconded by Councillor C Williams, it was **RESOLVED** that a value engineering/redesign exercise to simplify the proposals in line with available budget be carried out (Option 2).

